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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRAQ'S MAKHMOUR CAMP - UNHCR ON NEXT STEPS WITH THE TURKS

REF: STATE 261988

Classified by A/DCM Scot Marciel. Reasons 1.5 b and d.

SUMMARY

1. (C) On October 16, PolMilOff met with UNHCR Representative for Turkey Gesche Karrenbrock on Makhmour Camp issues. Karrenbrock hopes to meet with Turkish MFA and MOI officials in the next two weeks to discuss next steps. She said that Turkish press play linking the camp to the PKK was having a negative effect on the willingness of camp residents to voluntarily repatriate. She also complained that over one month ago UNHCR had provided Turkey with the names of 25 Turkish refugees in Dohuk who wish to be repatriated, but the Turks have not begun to process them. If Turkey is in a hurry to get the Makhmour population repatriated, she suggested, the Turks should move quickly on the Dohuk cases to create a pull effect. Karrenbrock said that if Turkey wants a rapid timeline for returns, it needs to institute a more speedy and efficient processing system, and one that offers the prospective returnees more assurance of how they will be received in Turkey. End Summary.

2. (C) UNHCR Turkey Rep Gesche Karrenbrock told PolMilOff Oct. 16 that the next steps for UNHCR with regard to Makhmour Camp were for her office to meet with Turkish MFA and MOI reps in Ankara. These meetings could take place Oct. 20 or 21, or after Oct. 27. Karrenbrock said UNHCR and the Turkish MFA have had extensive talks on repatriating the Makhmour population and UNHCR, and Turkish MFA seem to be on the same page. UNHCR has not yet had discussions with MOI, which she saw as key to the matter, and wanted to get into proposing modalities for the returns when she meets with MFA and MOI together. Karrenbrock explained that UNHCR would want, in addition to monitoring visits after returns, to be able to visit sites to which returnees will come in Turkey to assess reception capacity and evaluate what improvements/inputs might be required. She reported that UNHCR already monitors without impediment the small number of Makhmour returnees that come to Turkey each year, but that she would need Turkish agreement for the UNHCR to do this on a much larger scale if large numbers return from Makhmour. The first step for UNHCR, she explained, would be to get the best possible information to the refugees about conditions in Turkey (specifically in the villages to which they would be returning) and about what their options were. She emphasized that they must not feel coerced and that they must have options available.

3. (C) Karrenbrock said that for a returns program from Makhmour to succeed, returnees would need to be coming back to conditions in Turkey that were at least as good as those they were leaving behind in Makhmour. In many cases, she said, their home villages are in bad disrepair. She believed the GOT needed to make a commitment to get the villages into good shape. She worried that the GOT would respond that since the villages were in disrepair or destroyed, they could all just go back to Diyarbakir, a solution that would be unacceptable from UNHCR's perspective. She said that this issue required extensive discussion between UNHCR and GOT authorities.

4. (C) Karrenbrock told us that over a month ago the UNHCR had provided Turkish officials with the names of 25 Turkish refugees in Dohuk who wanted to be repatriated to Turkey. To date, none had been interviewed by the Turkish military in northern Iraq, the first step on the Turkish side in processing refugees for return. Karrenbrock said this made her wonder about the timeline intended for repatriating the Makhmour population. If these 25 cases could be processed quickly and received well in Turkey, it would help induce more returns from Makhmour. The total lack of action on the

cases by the Turks made her doubt that the Turkish system was ready to handle the large potential case load from Makhmour, and whether the Turks were really committed to moving quickly on Turkish refugees in Iraq. Faster processing, she said, would add reassurance to those interested in repatriation. She conceded that this might improve after she discusses modalities for return with the MFA and MOI. Karrenbrock did say that UNHCR had asked the Turks whether the same old system run by the same people would be used now for Makhmour or if there would be changes. UNHCR had not yet received an answer.

15. (C) Finally, Karrenbrock said press play in Turkey about Makhmour, including stories citing Turkish diplomats in Washington calling for the elimination of the PKK and the Makhmour Camp, and Turkish generals in Ankara saying the US should dissolve the camp, etc., were making camp residents less likely to voluntarily return, as they feel the GOT views them the same way as it does the PKK. If the Turks want the camp population to return, they need to take a different approach with the press, she said.

16. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
EDELMAN